



# Forest Park Master Plan

**Master Plan  
Update  
May - June 2004**

**Master Plan  
Update  
December 2003**

**Master Plan  
Update  
November 2003**

**Master Plan  
Update  
October 2003**

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Update  
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**Master Plan**



## Restoring The Glory Of Forest Park

The Forest Park that we enjoy today is not the same park that existed when it was created in 1876. It's not the park that hosted the 1904 World's Fair or even the one that prompted the creation of the Forest Park Master Plan.

The Forest Park we see today is a modern, functional park that the Parks Department, in partnership with Forest Park Forever, has restored to its former glory. And it was done in time to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 1904 World's Fair.

Forest Park belongs to all St. Louisans. It is the very heart of our community and its destiny is closely tied to the future of our city.

Forest Park, established in 1876, is one of the largest urban parks in the United States. At 1,293 acres it is approximately 500 acres larger than Central Park in New York. In 1904, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the greatest of the world's fairs, drew more

**Update  
March 2003**

than 19 million visitors from around the world to Forest Park.

**Advisory Board  
Annual Report  
For 2001**

Originally two miles outside the city limits, Forest Park today sits in the heart of St. Louis. It is the home to the region's major cultural institutions—the Zoo, Art Museum, History Museum, Science Center and the Muny Opera. Forest Park also serves as a sports center for golf, tennis, baseball, bicycling, boating, fishing, handball, ice skating, roller blading, jogging, cricket, rugby and more.

**Advisory Board  
Annual Report  
For 2000**

Attracting 12 million visitors per year, Forest Park is more than a scenic backdrop to an historic and expanding cityscape. It is an active participant and catalyst in the St. Louis community. Monuments, historic buildings, wildlife, waterways and landscapes combine to form a unique cultural institution that is vitally important to the entire St. Louis region. The park is recognized as an important gathering place where people of all ages, races and economic backgrounds can gather and mix in a positive way.

Forest Park is equally significant from a naturalistic perspective. In a city where 80% of the land has been developed for business, industry or residential uses, the park serves as a natural oasis for the city, an important source of green space, a respite for migrating birds, and an integrated ecosystem where humans and nature interact.

Forest Park is invigorating and life giving. It is the soul of the city and its survival is essential to the future of the St. Louis region.

Owned and operated by the City of St. Louis, Forest Park is one of 105 city parks under the jurisdiction of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry. Funding for the park over the years had not kept pace with inflation, resulting in “bare bones” maintenance. And 120 years and millions of visitors had taken a toll on the park's infrastructure. The lack of a planning process and limited public funding created an urban park in dire need of assistance.

## **The Master Plan**

In December 1993, the city convened the three-day Forest Park Summit, where hundreds of St. Louis residents expressed their visions of Forest Park. This summit gave birth to a two-phase planning process, including extensive public participation at hundreds of public meetings and the formation of a Forest Park Planning Committee, comprised park users, special interest

groups, institutional representatives and city officials.

The process was supported by 20 technical experts and consultants directed by the city's urban design director. To insure a plan was accepted, it was essential to listen to public comment and develop a plan that would maintain the balance of existing park uses, repair decaying infrastructure and improve neglected natural systems. The planning team adopted a four-step process emphasizing public input and review, developing goals and policies, design proposals, conceptual design and formulating a final comprehensive plan.

The planning process included 25 public meetings to gather input and ideas from park users and area residents; an additional 100 meetings with various community, park user, and neighborhood groups; citizen involvement in the planning process, led by the 67 member Forest Park Master Plan Committee met 20 times. An Executive Committee met more than 50 times.

The final Master Plan was drafted and approved by the Board of Aldermen. Estimating a cost of \$86 million, the plan was to be implemented by 2004, the anniversary of the 1904 World's Fair.

The Forest Park Master Plan represents the latest technology and responsible ecology, yet is realistic, attainable and is rooted in community consensus.

Among other accomplishments, the master plan:

- Improves the park's natural ecosystems
- Repairs the park's infrastructure
- Retains the park's existing cultural institutions
- Retains the existing balance of park uses
- Respects and retains the diversity of park patrons and activities
- Respects and improves existing park character
- Improves connections to neighborhoods, the city and the region
- Proposes no net loss of green space
- Provides operational flexibility
- Provides ongoing citizen input and involvement

Since its creation, Forest Park has been the source of pride and enjoyment but now there is a plan that offers a balanced approach to the park's future. The plan will serve as the framework to insure that Forest Park continues to be the "Crown Jewel" for entire St.

Louis region.

The major elements of the Master Plan are:

- **A River Returns:** Transform the park's lakes and lagoons into a river, which promotes better water quality, eliminates current flooding and expands fishing and other recreational opportunities.
- **Nature in the City:** Plant 7,500 trees, and preserve and maintain the park's forests, meadows, hills and wildlife habitat. New native wetlands and prairies are planned.
- **Historic Preservation:** Restoration of areas and buildings of historic prominence in the park, especially the Grand Basin at the foot of Art Hill, the central point of the 1904
- **Education:** Expand educational and youth programs, events, visitor services and outreach activities.
- **Access:** Realign, repair and, in some cases, remove roads and entrances to improve vehicular access and circulation into and within the park. New walking paths will tie all parts of the park together, and the capacity of the current path system will be expanded.
- **Recreational Opportunities:** Improve the park's ballfields, bike path, play areas for children, golf courses, tennis courts and other active recreational facilities.
- **Improved Park Facilities:** Restore current structures in the park, including the World's Fair and Lindell Pavilions, Jewel Box, Steinberg Skating Rink, Boat House and Picnic Shelters.

## Funding

The City of St. Louis committed to raising half of the cost of implementation in public funds. Forest Park Forever, a private, not-for profit organization, is raising the remainder in private funds from mid-sized and small corporations, national and local foundations, and individuals. In addition, Forest Park Forever is committed to increasing annual giving over the life of the capital campaign, insuring appropriate maintenance in the park.

The City of St. Louis immediately issued \$17 million in bonds to allow work on the lakes, roads, sidewalks and infrastructure to begin. The bonds are being repaid through a half-cent sales tax, approved by voters in 1993, that generates about \$1.7 million annually for the park. A portion of the annual revenue generated by the tax, about \$1.3 million, is used as debt payment on the

bond issue.

The initial goal of raising \$86 million was reached in 2000.

Funding as of Feb. 28, 2003, shows \$55.7 million raised by the City of St. Louis and \$46.9 from Forest Park Forever for a total of \$102.6 million, the largest amount of money ever raised by a public/private partnership for an urban park renovation anywhere in the country.

## **Governance And Management**

The Forest Park Advisory Board, appointed by the mayor, monitors and provides community input and oversight of the master plan. The board consists of 25 members and reports to the Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry of the City of St. Louis. The members of the board represent community groups, park institutions, park users, plus people with expertise in landscape and urban design, and environmental issues. The group is geographically and ethnically diverse.

## **Projects Completed In The Park**

The institutions that call the park home...Art Museum, History Museum, The Muny, Science Center and the Zoo have all contributed to the Master Plan, both monetarily and by initiating major improvements to their facilities. Although the Master Plan does not address the building needs of the institutions, all have undertaken public projects in addition to their own initiatives.

The Parks Dept. has rebuilt the bridges, roads and curbs throughout the park. Several roads have been removed, increasing the green space in the park. Since 1995, the city has planted 5,653 trees.

The Metropolitan Sewer District replaced 4,000 feet of 8-foot diameter sewer pipe. The \$4.4 million project replaced one of the main sewer lines in the park and eliminated the environmental hazard caused by a discharge of sewage into Post-Dispatch Lake.

The Flora Conservancy of Forest Park, an all-volunteer group, was created to plant flowers and undertake gardening projects inside and outside the Jewel Box, Pagoda Circle, Round Lake and other sites in the park.

## Major Construction Projects:

**World's Fair Pavilion:** The historic World's Fair Pavilion was given a \$1.1 million face lift and was the first facility to be restored as part of the Forest Park Master Plan.

Designed by distinguished English architect Henry Wright as an open-air, public structure, the World's Fair Pavilion was built by the Louisiana Purchase Exposition Committee in 1909-1910 and given to the City of St. Louis as part of a pledge to "fully restore the park" following the World's Fair. The original cost to build the Pavilion was \$35,000.

The restoration included the installation of new restrooms and a catering kitchen. The archways on the east side of the pavilion have been opened, revealing the original architecture and creating a salon-like space. New recessed lighting has been added, electricity and plumbing improved, and a new history wall recounts the Pavilion's colorful past. The twin towers on either side of the Pavilion had to be taken down and rebuilt after the discovery that the original brick under the stucco exterior had disintegrated due to years of weather damage.

**'Apotheosis of St. Louis'** Restored: A majestic and restored King Louis IX is overlooking the renovation of Forest Park. Work has been completed on the restoration of the "Apotheosis of St. Louis," the statue of Saint Louis, King Louis IX of France, which stands on Art Hill. The contract to restore the statue was for \$22,050, which included cleaning the statue, adjusting the patina, providing a protective coating and restoring the granite pedestal.

**Steinberg Rink:** The rink underwent a \$1.4 million renovation, which include a new rink surface and pipes for making ice, a new concrete surface surrounding the rink, new lights and sound system and landscaping.

The parking lot was removed north of the rink and a new lot was built to the south. New lighting was installed and sewer work done. A "prairie river" was created on the site of the original parking lot, providing some wetlands and wet meadows that will provide a connection to Jefferson Lake.

**Pagoda Circle:** Pagoda Circle, often called the "heart of the park" surrounds the Nathan Frank Bandstand and serves as the grand entrance for The Muny. The lake was rebuilt and the area now has



new roads, bridges and landscaping by the Parks Department and the Flora Conservancy, a group of volunteer gardeners. The Flora Conservancy carried out a landscaping project for Pagoda Circle developed by Oehme, van Sweden and Associates, saving the City of St. Louis hundreds of thousands of dollars. More than 27,800 perennials were planted by four teams of four gardeners during a four day planting period.

**Aviation Field:** Aviation Field got a \$2.2 million face-lift, which includes four new baseball fields on the western portion of the field, four new softball fields on the eastern side, and a concession stand and restrooms. One of the baseball fields is a special “performance field” with lights, bleacher seating, electronic scoreboard, home-run wall, dugouts and a sandy, professional-quality infield.

**Jefferson Lake:** The lake was drained, deepened and improved for fishing and angler access by the Missouri Department of Conservation.

**The Jewel Box:** A \$3.5 million renovation reorganized the interior to allow for flexibility, floral displays, and a new fountain while accommodating seated weddings for up to 250 people or seated dinner events for up to 150 guests. The north end of the building is redesigned to include a catering kitchen, additional restrooms and a bride’s room.

**The River Returns:** River Des Peres once was a free-flowing stream that ran through Forest Park. But in the 1920s, it was encased in huge underground concrete pipes to rid the park of what had become an “inexcusable nuisance”...an open, smelly sewer that flooded the park and surrounding neighborhoods.

The lakes, ponds and lagoons that make up the water attractions in the park were isolated, stagnant bodies of water that rely on city water to be filled. And, the lack of a watershed and natural drainage create ponds during heavy rains.

One of the goals of the Master Plan was to return a natural stream to the park. The return of the river and related improvements in the “heart of the park” project were started in 1997. Construction connected all existing lakes and lagoons from Jefferson Lake in the southeast corner of the park all the way to the Cascades in the western end in a plan that simulates the natural layout of the former river system.

Improvements include:

- Rebuilt and reconfigured lakes and lagoons to create a landscaped, free-flowing river-like water system
- Rivers and streams have sweeping curves and bends to accentuate their visual impact
- Use cascades, basins and pools to provide dramatic water attractions
- Expanded public boating and fishing
- Improved drainage and storm water runoff
- Reduced flooding and erosion
- Revived and protected wildlife habitats
- Improved water quality
- Constructed a water system that requires little maintenance

**Grand Basin/Post-Dispatch Lake:** “Grand” hardly begins to describe the centerpiece of the restoration of Forest Park. The Grand Basin/Post-Dispatch Lake and Boathouse has created an extraordinary gathering place for large public events, intimate picnics, casual dining, boating, sledding, strolling and, most of all, enjoying Forest Park.

As the initial step of the \$12.9 million renovation of the area, the water bodies were drained and dredged. The basin walls were replaced and new walkways, boat landings, eight fountains and landscaping added. Post-Dispatch Lake was expanded and landscaped. Two new islands, one for picnics and one for wildlife, were built and lagoons dredged and reconnected to the lake for improved boating. The golf holes on the basin and Art Hill were removed, returning the Grand Basin to public use.

**Boathouse:** The Master Plan called for the old structure be demolished and a new Boathouse built to accommodate visitors to the park along with new boats, a restaurant and, most important, a facility that will fit into the environment of the park.

Designed by St. Louis architect Laurent Torno, the new Boathouse is reminiscent of the tradition of boathouse cottages of the Midwest in the early twentieth century. The new facility is designed for year-round use and includes air conditioning and heating, a new stone fireplace for winter use, a fully equipped kitchen, and expanded restrooms.

An additional catering area on the north side of the boat storage facility allows for simultaneous use by the public and private parties. The Boathouse restaurant features a "family- friendly"



menu and both indoor and outdoor seating.

Boaters can travel from the boathouse throughout Post-Dispatch Lake, around a wildlife island and a picnic island, and into the fully restored Grand Basin, where 8 new large fountains provide a dramatic view night and day.

**Fish Hatcheries:** The six Fish Hatchery Lakes in Forest Park have been drained, deepened, aerated, stocked, and improved for fishing and angler access. A new “Columbus Bridge” was built to cross the river, which runs under Grand Drive near Round Lake.

**Bike Path:** The path has been expanded to two paths, one for wheels and the other for walkers/joggers/runners. Known as “the Heels and Wheels path,” it is built from the Steinberg area to Round Lake toward Lindell then down Lindell to Skinker Boulevard and through the southern section of the park. The path is 6.5 miles around the park. The dual path is 5.7 miles. The entire path system, including paths in the interior of the park, is 8 miles.

**Golf Course and Clubhouse:** Forest Park golfers can enjoy one of the finest public courses in the country. Although the Forest Park golf course was built in 1913 on the site of the 1904 World's Fair, today the Norman K. Probst Community Golf Course and Youth Learning Center in Forest Park is all new.

And, for the first time, the golf course has its own clubhouse, complete with restaurant, pro shop, banquet facilities and a youth learning center. The Forest Park Master Plan called for the \$12.5 million renovation of the golf course and the removal of holes from Art Hill and the Grand Basin.

Stan Gentry, chief architect for Hale Irwin Golf Services Inc., was charged with taking one of the favorite golf courses in the area and reconfiguring the 27 holes as three nine hole courses, which can be combined to be played as 18 holes, lending more variety and flexibility for golfers.

All three courses have lush zoysia fairways and are par 35. They are named for trees found in St. Louis:

**Hawthorne:** A beautiful layout that is relatively flat and easy to walk. There are enough hazards to make it challenging but still enjoyable.

**Dogwood:** This is for the more adventurous golfer. It starts out

hilly, has one hole with a water fairway and ends with a 600 yards par 5.

Redbud: This is for the adventurous golfer and incorporates some of the most dramatic holes from the original golf course layout. It is very hilly and a challenging layout.

The clubhouse is a beautiful glass structure, located on Lagoon Drive, near the Forsyth entrance to Forest Park. Ruthie's Grill is one of the finest restaurants in the park. Its veranda and patio have a view of the golf course.

**Forest Park Visitor and Education Center:** The historic Lindell Pavilion has undergone a \$4 million restoration. It is now the Dennis and Judith Jones Visitor and Education Center in Forest Park.

Operated by Forest Park Forever, which has its offices there, the facility includes a visitor's center, the Forest Park Café, locker & shower rental, classrooms, meeting spaces, rotating exhibits and a large special event space, "The Trolley Room."

The St. Louis Convention and Visitor's Commission offers trained volunteers to work at the central information desk to provide both Forest Park and general St. Louis tourism information as well as maps and access to web sites. Park visitor's can pick up a map of the park as well as information on all the attractions in the park. The Visitor's Center is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. but printed information is available when the building is open (usually 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.).

Through newly installed bike and walking trails, the Visitor and Education Center connects to the current recreational path system and serves as a major trailhead for runners, walkers, roller bladers or bicyclists who may want to drop by to fill their water bottle or use the portable tire pump.

A portion of the 22,000 square foot facility is available for special event rental. The 3,790 square foot Trolley Room can accommodate receptions for up to 400 guests or seated dinner arrangements for up to 250 people.

In addition to Forest Park Forever, a variety of partners share space in the building. The Missouri Department of Conservation has a field office, and hunting and fishing licenses will soon be available for purchase; OASIS, (the Older Adults Services and

Information Systems), offers a number of programs in the building.

The Master Plan has created a modern Forest Park, one that all St. Louis residents can look at with pride.

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**Official Web Site of the City of St. Louis**

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